

"I knew that it would be crucial to bring Southwest to Rochester so that they could see for themselves the large role that they now play in our community."

Rochester, NY- Congresswoman Louise Slaughter (NY-28), Ranking Member of the House Rules Committee, today led a discussion with executives from Southwest Airlines, leading transportation officials and business leaders welcoming them to Rochester and encouraging them to make Rochester a permanent destination.

The discussion included a powerhouse roundtable of U.S. Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood, Deputy Secretary John Porcari, Rochester Mayor Tom Richards, NYS Department of Transportation Commissioner Joan McDonald, University of Rochester President Joel Seligman and the region's most influential business leaders who collectively represent more than 40,000 Rochester-area employees.

Together the group discussed the travel needs and priorities of the Rochester community with Southwest Executives and encouraged them to continue their service in and out of the Greater Rochester International Airport making it a Southwest destination for years to come.

"I knew that it would be crucial to bring Southwest to Rochester so that they could see for themselves the large role that they now play in our community," said Slaughter. "I have always been a proponent for improved transportation networks for our city and region, and Southwest Airlines is a great new option for those flying in and out of Rochester and Western New York. I'm very grateful to my good friend Secretary Ray LaHood for coming back to Rochester. He has always been a champion for improved transportation because he and I both understand that improved transportation allows more economic development. I thank Southwest for coming to Rochester, the many business leaders that joined in today's conversation and I look forward to no bag fees for years to come in Rochester."

"Today's meeting was a great opportunity to discuss the significant demand for affordable air service in Rochester, and the crucial role that Southwest will play in maintaining and expanding service at the Greater Rochester International Airport as the airline continues to merge AirTran operations with their own," said U.S. Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood. "I appreciate Congresswoman Slaughter's leadership in bringing everyone together to provide affordable travel options and economic growth for the businesses and families of Monroe County and

upstate New York."

Southwest Airlines is positioned to have a great impact on the Rochester community. For the past ten years, Southwest, as the number one low cost carrier, has carried more passengers than any other airline in the United States. The Greater Rochester International Airport offers nearly 5,000 seats per day to 19 destinations.

Last month, Southwest Airlines confirmed their intent to convert AirTran Airways operations at the Greater Rochester International Airport to Southwest operations over time. Realizing that the merger is still underway, Slaughter provided the opportunity for Southwest to learn about their new home. The Southwest-AirTran merger is particularly beneficial because there is relatively little route overlap between the two carriers, and joining the two networks will attract more customers by allowing for a larger low-fare airline with a broader national network.

"The city of Rochester is a benefactor of the efforts of the people gathered here today and I am grateful to them all," said Mayor Thomas S. Richards. "Congresswoman Slaughter, our state and federal transportation leaders, the University of Rochester and our local business leadership—of which Southwest Airlines is now a part—have come together to accomplish a great thing for our community. I wish them all the greatest success in this endeavor."

"I applaud Representative Slaughter for her tremendous efforts and steadfast commitment to securing quality, low-cost airfare options in Rochester," said Joel Seligman, President of the University of Rochester where today's meeting took place. "I also want to thank Secretary LaHood for championing stronger consumer protections, lower fares and better airline service. Affordable transportation options that improve access are an essential component of economic growth here the Rochester region and across our nation. Thousands of University of Rochester students, faculty and staff, as well as patients of our Medical Center and their families, frequently fly in and out of Rochester, and I am delighted that Southwest Airlines will now be an option for them and the rest of our community."

Slaughter's History Fighting for Improved Air Travel in Western New York

Slaughter has been Rochester's long-time leader fighting for lower airfares and more reliable service to and from Rochester's airport. She has repeatedly brought together the area's

business leaders to speak with one voice on the need for more competitive service in Rochester and the positive economic impact it has in the Rochester region.

Slaughter has been a longtime leader for improved transportation options in Western New York with the understanding that improved transportation options create a more vibrant local economy.

Upon first arriving in Congress, she succeeded in getting the Rochester Airport added to the Federal Aviation Administration's airport list. Inclusion on this list is critical to ensuring that airline carriers – not local taxpayers – fund airport expansion projects. Without a place on that list, the local government would have had to fund the millions of dollars in needed upgrades and we may not have the improvements we have today.

In 1999, Slaughter convened an Aviation Competition Listening Session with then Secretary of Transportation Rodney Slater to hear from local and national leaders on the problems and proposed solutions to high fares plaguing mid-sized communities such as Rochester. This listening session provided a forum to highlight the significant challenges facing Rochester at that time.

Slaughter also led the effort to convince JetBlue that they should serve the Rochester market by providing written commitments from Rochester-based corporations that would rely on their service. She also worked closely with federal transportation officials to ensure JetBlue landing and take-off rights at busy airports in New York and around the country. In 2000, Slaughter welcomed JetBlue to Rochester. JetBlue's low cost competition saved local travelers over \$12.5 million in its first year of service alone, and ushered in a wave of lower fares from not only new carriers like AirTran, but from legacy carriers as well.

In March 2011, Slaughter partnered with US Airways to announce temporary reductions on US Airways flights to and from the Greater Rochester International Airport.

[For more on Slaughter's work to improve air transportation in Western New York, click here.](#)

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